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ABSTRACT

For over 2 years, Blak Hawk College (Illinois) has provided high school equivalency (GED) candidates and recipients, older returning students, and underprepared high school graduates with a Tech Prep curriculum to give them the skills to make the transition from adult basic education to college or work. The Adult Tech Prep (ATP) core curriculum includes applied communications, applied mathematics, applied science, computers, and job readiness, while the faculty team teaching the program has received training in applied academics, productive thinking, decision making, planning, forecasting, and communication. In order to participate in ATP, students must test at the tenth grade level in math and reading. Because ATP was designed to aid in the transition to college or work, the program's schedule mirrors that of a semester-long college program. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the students meet for applied communications, job readiness, and computers, while Tuesday and Thursday they meet for math and science instruction. ATP has two articulation agreements with college credit programs: students can receive 4 hours of college credit if they have earned an ATP certificate and completed 9 hours at Black Hawk College and all students must take a placement test for math, reading, and English. After the program's first 2 years, 65% of the students who entered ATP have completed the program, and 77% of those who received an ATP certificate have enrolled in the college. (HAA)

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By

Donna Schaad
Black Hawk College

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Adult Tech Prep

by Donna Schaad

For more than two years Black Hawk College Adult Basic Education (ABE) has provided GED candidates and recipients, older returning students and underprepared high school graduates with a Tech Prep curriculum to give them the skills to make the transition from adult basic education to college or work. This article will describe Adult Tech Prep (ATP) at Black Hawk College, the changes that have been made in the program since it's inception, and the effect the program has had on participants.

Adult Tech Prep at Black Hawk College

The eight and a half by eleven inch ad appeared in the local newspaper. The headline read: "Tech Prep.... a world of difference!" The skills the company running the ad requires in future employees were enumerated: strong basic skills in reading, writing, and math; being an effective team player; good communication skills; problem solving; being a lifelong learner; and adaptability to change. The ad continued: "To qualify for these exciting and good paying jobs of the future, see your high school counselor and ask about Tech Prep". John Deere, the community's largest employer, was clearly letting high school students know if they want a job at Deere (even on the shop floor) they have to have at least an associate's degree in manufacturing technology.

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) students at Black Hawk College did not have access to high school counselors, much less to a Tech Prep curriculum. At the fall '92 Tech Prep Conference in Moline, IL, Linda Fairweather, Director of Adult Basic Education for Black Hawk College asked the keynote speaker, Dale Parnell, what was happening with Tech Prep for

the GED student. He responded that as far as he knew, nothing was being done to prepare GED students for a Tech Prep curriculum. That conversation prompted the Black Hawk College Adult Basic Education Department to pose the following question: Is there a way to prepare the GED recipient to meet prerequisite skills for enrollment in Black Hawk College technical curricula? In response, Adult Tech Prep (ATP) was designed to help adult students make the transition to college or work. According to Bragg (1992), Tech Prep concepts offer students the opportunity for success in college and careers by blending applied academics, career education and work-based learning.

The core curriculum for Adult Tech Prep includes applied communications, applied mathematics, applied science, computers, and job readiness as suggested by Hull and Parnell (1991). The materials for the applied communications class are from Agency for Instruction Technology (AIT). Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) materials are used for the applied math and applied science (Principles of Technology). In the computer class, students are introduced to WordPerfect, Lotus, dBase and DDC Publishing. The job readiness class begins with study skills and learning styles. Students have the opportunity to assess skills and interests as well as careers related to those skills and interests. Job seeking and keeping skills are also discussed.

The Adult Tech Prep Team, made up of faculty, the intake counselor, and the coordinator meets on a regular basis. All Team members have received training in applied academics and Talents Unlimited model which employs teaching strategies focusing on productive thinking, decision making, planning, forecasting, and communication as well as academic skills. The Talents Unlimited model is designed to help teachers recognize and nurture the multiple talents of students. Nearly all students are talented, that is, can be above average in at least one of the

many important intellectual talents we can now measure. There are several ways of being smart which are related to the world-of-work. Adult students who have never before found success in school are very encouraged to hear that they have talents that are needed by employers. The Talents Unlimited curriculum is introduced in applied communication and reinforced in each class. The Team has chosen to incorporate the SCANS Three-part Foundation throughout the curriculum. The Team also has one integrated project each semester where a math concept is applied in physics, written about in applied communications, with the final project, including graphs, produced in computer class.

Not every ABE student has the appropriate level of skills for Adult Tech Prep. Students must test at the 10th grade level in math and reading as indicated by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Students testing below the 10th grade level are enrolled in a traditional ABE/GED class to bring up math and reading skills. Since materials are geared to 10th grade level, it is the Team's opinion that allowing a student with below 10th grade level math and reading skills to enter the program would simply be inviting the student to fail.

In most ABE classes at Black Hawk College, students can enroll every three weeks and drop out at any time without penalty. Adult Tech Prep, however, was designed to help students make the transition to college or work. College begins as a semester long commitment; therefore the Adult Tech Prep schedule is set up like a college schedule. Students meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the Outreach Center (our largest adult education site) for applied communications, job readiness, and computers. After the first week, students meet on Tuesday and Thursday on the Moline campus for math and science. Meeting on campus is done for two reasons. The primary reason is to utilize the science lab. The second reason is to facilitate the move to campus. Students become so comfortable at the Outreach Center that they

often hate to leave. The job readiness instructor takes the students on a campus tour at the end of the first week. Together they locate the classrooms and pick up their parking tags.

Upon completion of the semester long ATP program and with at least an eighty percent attendance rate and average or better grades, a student will receive an Adult Tech Prep Certificate listing competencies acquired. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of a GED candidate by focusing on applied academics and preparing students to take the GED test. Students can also receive one to four hours of articulated college credit to be used as electives upon successful completion.

The Adult Tech Prep program has two articulation agreements with the College credit program. Students can receive four hours of college credit: one hour in Orientation 100 and three hours in Physics 200. The only thing the student must do to receive the four hours of credit (at no cost) is to have earned an Adult Tech Prep certificate and to have completed nine hours at Black Hawk College within one year of completing Adult Tech Prep. All Black Hawk College students must take the ASSET, a placement test for math, reading and English. Articulation for math and English has not been pursued because it is assumed that after a semester of applied math and applied communications, students would receive higher scores in those areas on the ASSET, thus being placed in accredited courses as opposed to remedial courses.

The primary sources of assessment are the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and interviews. All students enrolling in ABE classes must take the TABE. The intake counselor conducts and records the entrance, mid-term and exit interviews. The intake interview lets the student know what to expect and allows the counselor to gather important information about the students' goals, fears, and talents. The mid-term evaluation is based on the SCANS Three-part

Foundation (1991) which identifies the basic skills, thinking skills and personal qualities employers look for in employees. The counselor tries to incorporate encouraging elements into the mid-term evaluation session. Students are often surprised at how well the instructors feel they are doing. Having the counselor do the interviews maintains consistency, but also allows students to respond to the effectiveness of the instructors. The exit interview is the time to reflect on the semester and learn what the students have gained and their plans for the future. The first year of the program the students were pre- and post-tested in the ASSET and given the ACT Adult Learner Survey. However, the best evaluation of the program is seeing the change in the students.

Changes Made In Adult Tech Prep

There have been just a few changes made in the original Adult Tech Prep model. The title of the science class has been changed from applied physics to applied science. The curriculum has not changed, but students seem to feel more confident that they can be successful in applied science. Students were not as confident when it was called applied physics. Though the curriculum was also designed to prepare students for the GED test, the faculty have found that there is not enough time within the program for the student to take the pretests required for GED testing. Adult Tech Prep students pursuing a GED certificate are encouraged to sign up for an afternoon or evening GED class. GED candidates are now encouraged to take the GED test before they begin Adult Tech Prep. There have some personnel changes with new instructors in science and job readiness. A program coordinator has been hired; the program's developer is no longer directly involved other than for tracking statistical data. A few students were allowed to enter the program with less than a 10th grade level in math as indicated by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The Team agreed that it was not a wise decision

because of the difficulty the students had in managing the course work. It would be a rare exception that a lower math score would be accepted for future participants.

Effect of Program on Participants

The changes in students are quite visible. Some show it in the way they carry themselves or make eye contact. Others become more professional in their dress and speak with an air of confidence. A delegation from Waubonsee College in Sugar Grove, IL, visited Black Hawk College to gather information about Adult Tech Prep. A luncheon meeting was arranged so the visitors could question the first Adult Tech Prep completers. Three questions helped to provide interesting evaluative information. The Waubonsee College staff first asked the students how they felt about computers before Adult Tech Prep. The students' response can be summarized as "scared to death" because they had little or no computer experience. The second question asked what the students gained most from the program. Their response was "self-esteem" raising the important question of "How does one teach self esteem?" Students reported that they had gained confidence in their abilities through successes in the Adult Tech Prep program and learned that they have what it takes to be a college student. Finally they were asked whether they would have gone on to Black Hawk College if they had not been involved in Adult Tech Prep. The adamant response was "No way"! Previously they had felt that they did not know <u>how</u> to go to college.

Each semester students mention how their views of things have changed. They enter the program as adults but with only a small amount of information and knowledge about educational and occupational opportunities. The perfect example is Tammy, who wanted to be a legal secretary. Her mom and sister had been secretaries. Tammy was a single mom on welfare. Since she needed to make more money than her mom or sister in order to provide for her two

children, she decided to be a legal secretary. Tammy was basing her decision on limited information. When she got into Adult Tech Prep her world began to expand. She had a lot more information on which to base her decision. She also found she had a real gift for math and science. Tammy is currently majoring in production technology and considering an engineering degree. What would Tammy's chances of making that discovery have been if she had not experienced Adult Tech Prep?

The statistics from the first two year's indicate that sixty-five percent of the students who enter the program complete it. However, seventy-seven percent of those who earned their Adult Tech Prep certificate enroll at Black Hawk College. In a study done for the Iowa State Board of Education, Hartwig and Beder (1992) reported that in 1990 five percent of surveyed GED recipients were attending two-year colleges. Seven percent had graduated from two-year colleges. Two percent were attending four-year colleges, and two percent had graduated from four-year colleges. Of the GED recipients completing Adult Tech Prep, seventy-eight percent have enrolled in Black Hawk College. The program goal of preparing students to enter college has obviously been met.

In summary, the Adult Tech Prep model has proved to be successful in helping the ABE student make the transition to Black Hawk College. Students experienced an applied curriculum that was relevant to work. Students learned how to go to college and gained enough confidence to enroll. Adult Tech Prep is a supportive and nurturing learning community. Will students seek out a college learning community to support them in their pursuit of a degree? Will the ATP preparation be enough to insure these student's success in the college environment or will they need continued support services? The first class of ATP completers should be nearing the end of their college course work at Black Hawk College. What percent of students who

complete the course work at Black Hawk College will pursue a baccalaureate degree? In a future study it would be interesting to look at how successful ATP students are at Black Hawk College.

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Adult Tech Prep Transition Statistics

Target Audience:	GED Recipients			GED Candidate			Under Prepared H.S. Graduate			Total		
	FY 94	FY 95	GRAND	FY 94	FY 95	GRAND	FY 94	FY 95	GRAN	FY 94	FY 95	GRAND
category	16/40%	17/44%	33/42%	9/23%	4/10%	13/16%	15/38%	18/46%	33/42%	40/100%	39/100	79/100%
dropped	5/31%	8/47%	13/39%	4/45%	3/75%	7/54%	4/27%	4/22%	8/24%	13/33%	15/38%	28/35%
completed	11/69%	9/53%	20/61%	5/56%	1/25%	6/46%	11/73%	14/78%	25/76%	27/68%	24/62%	51/65%
certificate	9/82%	9/100%	18/90%	4/80%	1/100%	5/83%	11/100	14/100	25/100	24/89%	24/100	48/94%
post-sec.	8/89%	6/67%	14/78%	3/75%	1/100%	4/80%	8/73%	10/71%	18/72%	20/83%	17/71%	37/77%

1. category - the actual number and percent of total within each category

2. dropped - the actual number and percent of each category that dropped from the program in each category

3. completed - the actual number and percent of each category that completed the Adult Tech Prep Program

4. certificate - the actual number and percent of completers that earned a certificate (to earn a certificate one must have 80% attendance and average work)

5. post-secondary - the actual number and percent certificate earners that enrolled the following semester in post secondary